ABOUT TIME

THE UNAUTHORIZED GUIDE TO DOCTOR WHO

EXPANDED 2ND EDITION

1970–1974

SEASONS 7 TO 11

TAT WOOD

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with additional material by LAWRENCE MILES

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how does this book work ?

About Time prides itself on being the most comprehensive, wide-ranging and at times almost *shockingly* detailed handbook to *Doctor Who* that you might ever conceivably need, so great pains have been taken to make sure there's a place for everything and everything's in its place. Here are the "rules"...

Every *Doctor Who* story gets its own entry, and every entry is divided up into four major sections. The first, which includes the headings **Which One is This?**, **Firsts and Lasts** and **X Things to Notice**, is designed to provide an overview of the story for newcomers to the series (and we trust there are more of you, owing to the success of the Welsh series) or relatively "lightweight" fans who aren't too clued-up on a particular era of the programme's history. We might like to *pretend* that all *Doctor Who* viewers know all parts of the series equally well, but there are an awful lot of people who - for example - know the 70s episodes by heart and don't have a clue about the 60s. This section also acts as an overall Spotters' Guide to the series, pointing out most of the memorable bits.

After that comes the **Continuity** section, which is where you'll find all the pedantic detail. Here there are notes on the Doctor (personality, props and cryptic mentions of his past), the supporting cast, the TARDIS and any major Time Lords who might happen to wander into the story. Following these are the **Non-Humans** and **Planet Notes** sections, which can best be described as "high geekery"... we're old enough to remember the *Doctor Who Monster Book*, but not too old to want a more grown-up version of our own, so expect full-length monster profiles. Next comes **History**, which includes all available data about the time in which the story's supposed to be set.

Of crucial importance: note that throughout the **Continuity** section, *everything* you read is "true" - i.e. based on what's said or seen on-screen - except for sentences in square brackets [like this], where we cross-reference the data to other stories and make some suggestions as to how all of this is supposed to fit together. You can trust us absolutely on the non-bracketed material, but the bracketed sentences are often just speculation.

The only exception to this rule is the **Additional Sources** heading, which features any off-screen information from novelisations, writer interviews, etc that might shed light on the way the story's supposed to work. (Another thing to notice here: anything written in single inverted commas - 'like this' - is a word-for-word quote from the script or something printed on screen, whereas anything in double-quote marks "like this" isn't.)

The third major section is **Analysis**. It opens with **Where Does This Come From?**, and this may need explaining. For years there's been a tendency in fandom to assume that *Doctor Who* was an "escapist" series which very rarely tackled anything particularly topical, but with hindsight this is bunk. Throughout its history, the programme reflected, reacted to and sometimes openly *discussed* the trends and talking-points of the era, although it isn't always immediately obvious to the modern eye. (Everybody knows that "The Sun Makers" was supposed to be satirical, but how many people got the subtext of "Destiny of the Daleks"?). It's our job here to put each story into the context of the time in which it was made, to explain *why* the production team thought it might have been a good idea.

Up next is **Things That Don't Make Sense**, basically a run-down of the glitches and logical flaws in the story, some of them merely curious and some entirely ridiculous. Unlike a lot of TV guidebooks, here we don't dwell on minor details like shaky camera angles and actors treading on each others' cues - at least unless they're *chronically* noticeable - since these are trivial even by our standards. We're much more concerned with whacking great story loopholes or particularly grotesque breaches of the laws of physics.

Analysis ends with **Critique**; though no consensus will ever be found on *any* story, we've not only tried to provide a balanced (or at least not-too-irrational) view but also attempted to judge each story by its own standards, *not just* the standards of the post-CGI generation.

The last of the four sections is **The Facts**, which covers ordinary, straightforward details like cast lists and viewing figures. We've also provided a run-down of the story's cliffhangers, since a lot of *Doctor Who* fans grew up thinking of the cliffhangers as the programme's defining points.

how does this book work?

This gives you a much better sense of a story's structure than a long and involved plot breakdown (which we're fairly sure would interest nobody at this stage, barring perhaps those stories presently missing from the BBC archives).

The Lore is an addendum to the Facts section, which covers the off-screen anecdotes and factettes attached to the story. The word "Lore" seems fitting, since long-term fans will already know much of this material, but it needs to be included here (a) for new initiates and (b) because this is supposed to be a one-stop guide to the history of *Doctor Who*.

A lot of "issues" relating to the series are so big that they need forums all to themselves, which is why most story entries are followed by mini-essays. Here we've tried to answer all the questions that seem to demand answers, although the logic of these essays changes from case to case. Some of them are actually trying to find *definitive* answers, unravelling what's said in the TV stories and making sense of what the programme-makers had in mind. Some have more to do with the real world than the *Doctor Who* universe, and aim to explain why certain things about the series were so important at the time. Some are purely speculative, some delve into scientific theory and some are just whims, but they're *good* whims and they all seem to have a place here. Occasionally we've included footnotes on the names and events we've cited, for those who aren't old enough or British enough to follow all the references.

We should also mention the idea of "canon" here. Anybody who knows *Doctor Who* well, who's been exposed to the TV series, the novels, the comic-strips, the audio adventures and the trading-cards you used to get with Sky Ray ice-lollies, will know that there's always been some doubt about how much of *Doctor Who* counts as "real", as if the TV stories are in some way less made-up than the books or the short stories. We'll discuss this in shattering detail later on, but for now it's enough to say that *About Time* has its own specific rules about what's canonical and what isn't. In this book, we accept everything that's shown in the TV series to be the "truth" about the *Doctor Who* universe (although obviously we have to gloss over the parts where the actors fluff their lines). Those non-TV stories which have made a serious attempt to become part of the canon, from Virgin Publishing's New Adventures to the recent audio adventures from Big Finish, aren't considered to be 100 percent "true" but do count as supporting evidence. Here they're treated as what historians call "secondary sources", not definitive enough to make us change our whole view of the way the *Doctor Who* universe works but helpful pointers if we're trying to solve any particularly fiddly continuity problems.

It's worth remembering that unlike (say) the stories written for the old *Dalek* annuals, the early Virgin novels were an honest attempt to carry on the *Doctor Who* tradition in the absence of the TV series, so it seems fair to use them to fill the gaps in the programme's folklore even if they're not exactly - so to speak - "fact".

You'll also notice that we've divided up this work according to "era", not according to Doctor. Since we're trying to tell the *story* of the series, both on- and off-screen, this makes sense. The actor playing the Main Man might be the only thing we care about when we're too young to know better, but anyone who's watched the episodes with hindsight will know that there's a vastly bigger stylistic leap between "The Horns of Nimon" and "The Leisure Hive" than there is between "Logopolis" and "Castrovalva". Volume IV covers the producerships of Philip Hinchcliffe and Graham Williams, two very distinct stories in themselves, and everything changes again - when Williams leaves the series, not when Tom Baker does - at the start of the 1980s.

There's a kind of logic here, just as there's a kind of logic to everything in this book. There's so much to *Doctor Who*, so much material to cover and so many ways to approach it, that there's a risk of our methods irritating our audience even if all the information's in the right places. So we need to be consistent, and we have been. As a result, we're confident that this is as solid a reference guide / critical study / monster book as you'll ever find. In the end, we hope you'll agree that the only realistic criticism is: "Haven't you told us *too* much here?"

And once we're finished, we can watch the *new* series and start the game all over again.

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7.1: "Spearhead from Space"

(Serial AAA. Four Episodes, 3rd January - 24th January 1970.)

Which One is This? And Now In Colour! Shop dummies come to life and blow people up in bus queues; killer replicas lurk in Madame Tussauds. And, if *that* lot didn't send you behind the sofa, there's Jon Pertwee's nude scene.

Firsts and Lasts The first story of the 1970s, the beginning of the Doctor's exile on Earth (not to mention a whole slew of assaults on the Home Counties, usually at monthly intervals), the start of what's commonly referred to as "the UNIT era" and the debut of Jon Pertwee as the Third Doctor. Pertwee was considerably more famous (especially among the series' target audience) than his two predecessors, so for the first time, small children had proof that the series was "just pretending". (Indeed, unlike Hartnell and Troughton, Pertwee appeared as himself in public rather than in character - sometimes driving Chitty Chitty Bang Bang.[1])

In tone, "Spearhead from Space" is more markedly different from anything seen before - as close to a complete reboot as you can get. UNIT are rethought (after 6.3, "The Invasion"), and the Brigadier is deployed as a permanent "boss" for the Doctor, as signing him missions like various other acronymic agencies in ITC adventure series of the time. As a result, the Doctor finally makes the jump from "wandering scholar" to "adventure hero". Even the programme's change of format - from a series about an old man who travels through space and time, to a series about an alien who defends the Earth from less benign aliens - fits the action-serial format. (Soon enough, Our Hero will be dressing like Jason King[2], and using martial arts on various henchmen.) There's a more overt love of gadgetry, so the Third Doctor spontaneously acquires a Bond-style homing beacon wristwatch.

Manifestly, this is the first story made in colour, although this transition mattered less to the viewers than it did to the BBC's overseas marketing department (although not in the ways you'd expect - see **The Lore**). Henceforth, the technical opportunities that colour opens up will be explored enthusiastically, if not always wisely (see 7.2, "Doctor Who and the Silurians"). Making the shift seem even greater, "Spearhead from Space" is the *only* story in the classic (sorry) series to be shot completely on film, instead of video with occasional filmed inserts, giving it the look of an ITC adventure show, albeit one with a lot less beige. (Film, with its different texture, has a way of making you think that Roger Moore or Tony Curtis are going to turn up at any moment. Despite this risk, the BBC Wales series is processed in post-production to give it a uniform film-like sheen but the result is noticeably different from real film. See **Did *Doctor Who* Really End in 1969?** under 6.7, "The War Games" and **Which Is Better: Film or Video?** under 12.3, "The Sontaran Experiment".)

Season 7 Cast/Crew

- Jon Pertwee (the Doctor)
- Caroline John (Liz Shaw)
- Nicholas Courtney (Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart)
- John Levene (Sergeant Benton)

- Barry Letts (Producer)
- Terrance Dicks (Script Editor)

Capping off this transition, the episodes begin and end with a new lurid Op art sequence. The credits are delivered as a series of slides rather than a scroll (whereas the 60s *opening* titles were like nothing else on television, the black and white end-graphics had been a legacy of the 1950s) - although even here, the emphasis on colour means that the credit-text is occasionally yellow rather than white, and has its own typeface. The title "Spearhead from Space" zooms in toward the viewer - this experiment isn't repeated, but it's characteristic of the title-tinkering that goes on in Season Seven (see especially 7.3, "The Ambassadors of Death"). We get our first colour monster in Episode Four - and to nobody's great surprise, it's green.

On a more prosaic level, this story also sees the first appearance of Liz Shaw (who instigates the tradition of the Doctor having a single female companion or "assistant", as they start calling them) and the Autons. First appearances of two guest actors we're going to see a lot in the years to come: John Woodnutt (see 10.3, "Frontier in Space", etc.) and Prentis Hancock (see 10.4, "Planet of the Daleks", etc.). Turning up surprisingly late in the series' history, this is the first time we're told that the Doctor has two hearts (see **When Did The Doctor Get A Second Heart?** under 6.1, "The Dominators"). It's the first use of the words "dimensionally transcendental" and "dematerialisation code", and the first time the Doctor himself selects the name "Dr John Smith" [see 4.9, "The Evil of the Daleks" and 5.7, "The Wheel in Space"].

When "Spearhead from Space" was repeated it on Friday evenings eighteen months after its initial broadcast, it became the first story *not* to be shown on Saturdays. And...(sob)... it's the very last sighting of the Freezer Machine prop from "The Space Museum", which (as you'll doubtless recall from Volumes I and II) was the BBC's all-purpose "space" prop for the 1960s. Appropriately, it's here seen in the Doctor's new lab, and takes its curtain-call four and a half minutes into episode three.

Four Things to Notice About "Spearhead from Space"

1. The moment when the shop window dummies come to life in episode four and begin the mass slaughter of bystanders in an English suburban high street is one of the most famously scary sequences in the entire run of *Doctor Who*. Everybody who grew up in the 60s or 70s remembers seeing this, although curiously not everybody can remember *where* they saw it, and often misremember it as *The Avengers* or something else on the other channel.

Look out, though, for the moment when the Autons smash their way through the shop window - that's right, they don't show the actual window-breaking but instead cut away to a bobby's reaction upon his being confronted by menacing mannequins. (Curiously, PC Plod seems to be on a tea-break with a GPO engineer, rather than on patrol as he ought to be.) One might almost surmise that the wholesale plundering of this story's iconography for the big relaunch with X1.1, "Rose", in 2005 was merely a pretext for gloating that BBC Wales could afford fake glass.

2. After an all-action debut in "The Invasion", complete with a base inside a Hercules transporter plane, UNIT settles down to be the rather low-rent World Army we're going to see from now on. Accordingly, Liz Shaw is escorted to a secret base under St Pancras station, but the lab she and the Doctor use is apparently part of the same car park, only screened off and filled with bottles of frothy stuff. (Perhaps they have to crack the secret formula of Diet Pepsi as a money-spinning sideline?) The comparison with the BBC Wales UNIT or even the preposterously well-funded Torchwood from Series Two is heartbreaking. Still, at least the Brig himself has an office - even though he hardly uses it and spends most of his time hanging around in the Doctor's lab. As offices of Top Secret military agencies go, the Brig's office is rather cosy (he even has a box file behind his head with a big red X on it - surely not *the* X-Files?), but it's at the end of a corridor made of breeze-blocks and lined with drainage pipes. Did it used to be the toilets?

3. Sam Seeley - the poacher who comes across a Nestene energy unit, and squirrels it away in his truck - is the first of a new kind of character we'll see a lot in the Pertwee stories: the comedy yokel. This being a Bob Holmes script, the comedy - such as it is - comes from a crafty man on the make, and his distrustful wife assuming the worst when he acts secretively. Couple this with the fact that Seeley's accent is very wrong indeed (for a story that's supposedly happening in Essex) and he instigates a long and dishonourable sequence of what we'll be calling "Pigbin" figures (as Pigbin Josh, from 8.3, "The Claws of Axos" is by far the most egregious example). Seeley, at least, speaks something recognisably like real people - using consonants and everything - but it sets an unfortunate precedent. Of course, he's not the *only* crafty man on the make, as Mullins the Porter (who phones the tabloids to blab about the Doctor's weird blood) also makes trouble, but technically isn't a comedy yokel. He's a comedy Welshman, which is a different thing entirely (see **Why Didn't Plaid Cymru Lynch Barry Letts?** under 10.5, "The Green Death").

4. Observe Jon Pertwee's shameless gurning as he's strangled by the rubber Nestene tentacle, as if he's already realised what a strange way this is to make a living. What's more, this was a remount because the first attempt looked worse. Five more years of this ahead, people.

The Continuity

The Doctor The Doctor collapses as soon as he reaches Earth [immediately after his regeneration, it seems], and for the first few hours his behav-

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...the unauthorized & ambitiously definitive guide to Who...

The shop-window dummies that come to life and wage war on the High Street. The giant maggots that burrow their way out of the mineshaft and threaten the whole of Welsh civilisation. The Queen Spider in her cave of blue crystal, gloating as the radiation eats away the body of the leading man.

These aren't just the greatest, strangest or most *Doctor-Who*-like moments in *Doctor Who*. These are the moments that make up an era, part of a universe of things we'd never seen before and never expected. And this is the all-purpose handbook to that universe, both on- and off-screen. Contained within these volumes is everything you could reasonably want to know about the original series of *Doctor Who*, from the nuances of Cyberman culture to the science of the Eye of Harmony, from the programme's most triumphant successes to its most bizarre logical flaws, from its roots in the BBC of the 1960s to its legacy in the here and now.

But above all else, this is a history. A history of the *Doctor Who* continuum; a history of the way the series changed across the span of a generation; and a history of those who grew up with it, of what it meant to the children of the '60s, '70s and '80s.

This is, in a very real sense, *About Time*.

Written by **Tat Wood** (*TV Zone*, *Doctor Who Magazine*), this Second Edition of *About Time* Volume III dissects *Doctor Who* Seasons 7 to 11 - the whole of the Jon Pertwee era - and contains nearly three times as much material as its predecessor. New essays in this volume include "Why Did We Countdown to TV Action?" and "What are the Silliest Examples of Science in *Doctor Who?*"

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